

BUSINESS LETTERS

UNIT 13

In this, the second series of business letters we will look at the language used in *letters of complaint* and how to reply to such letters.

LETTERS OF COMPLAINT

In writing a letter of complaint there are **two major things** to remember.

Firstly do not take a long time to write the letter. If you are sure you have a genuine reason to complain then write the letter immediately. A quick letter of complaint will help the person dealing with the problem to find the appropriate documents and therefore answer your letter. Also do not apologize for complaining as this will weaken your argument.

The second point is to be polite. Remember you are probably writing a letter to an individual in a department who did not personally make the mistake and if you antagonize them by being rude or impolite you will only make the problem harder to solve.

The company which made the mistake is in business to serve their customers and will probably want to correct the mistake as quickly as possible. So be polite but firm.

Opening a letter of complaint

*We would like to inform you . . .
I am writing to complain about . . .
I am writing with reference to order No. 6453/F
which we received yesterday.
There appears to be an error in the latest invoice you sent us.*

If a mistake is being repeated or is particularly annoying you may want to express dissatisfaction. This is quite acceptable but again be polite.

Expressing Dissatisfaction

*This is the second time the mistake has occurred and we are far from happy with the service you offer.
This problem has occurred twice now. Please ensure that it does not happen again.
These mistakes are causing us serious problems and if you can not fulfill our order efficiently we will have to consider other sources of supply.
We are very disappointed in the quality of the last two consignments.*

The next part of letter should explain the problem.

Explaining the problem

*There appears to be an error in the invoice.
There seems to be some misunderstanding concerning terms of payment.
Deliveries have been arriving, on average, four days behind schedule.*

If you have realized why the problem is happening it will help the supplier if you tell them about it and offer a solution. By offering a solution you may help the supplier to correct the mistake as quickly as possible.

Suggesting a Solution

*The best solution would be for me to . . .
I think the problem is with your accounts procedure. If you . . .
I think we can overcome this mistake by . . .
A simple solution would be . . .*

REPLYING TO LETTERS OF COMPLAINT

The most important point to remember when replying to letters of complaint is that your customer is annoyed and the quicker you solve the problem the more likely it is that they will continue to use your company. So do not delay in answering letters of complaint.

The second point is that you must be very polite. It is necessary to acknowledge the letter promptly and to thank the customer for informing you of the problem.

Opening a letter of reply

*Thank you for your letter of 10 September informing us that . . .
We are replying to your letter of 10 September in which you told us . . .*

Sometimes a letter of complaint will need time to be investigated. But remember that you need to keep your customer happy. So if you need time to investigate tell your customer what you are doing.

Giving yourself time to investigate a complaint

*Unfortunately we can not give you an immediate answer to your letter, but we are investigating the situation and will reply to you shortly.
We need to send the goods for tests to our factory in Bavaria and as soon as the tests have been completed we will inform you of the results.
As this is the first time we have had such a problem we need to thoroughly investigate the situation, but we will reply to your letter as soon as possible.*

If a complaint is justified you should explain the mistake to the customer and also inform them of how you intend to solve the problem. This will give the customer the confidence to continue dealing with you and will make them feel that they are a valued client.

Explaining the mistake

*The mistake was due to . . .
The reasons for the mistake were . . .
The problem arose because . . .
The error was due to . . .*

Solving the problem

*The goods have been withdrawn and we will replace the material sent to you.
We are taking these models out of production and calling in all those that have already been supplied.
The computer has been reprogrammed and there should be no further problems.
We have checked and found the error in our accounting procedures and we do not anticipate any further problems.*

When you close a letter of reply you should state that the mistake was an exception and you should, of course, apologize to the customer.

Closing a letter of reply

*In closing we would like to apologize for this error and also point out that this error will not occur again.
Finally, may we confirm that this mistake was exceptional and should not occur again. Please accept our apologies for the inconvenience caused.
We are pleased to be able to inform you that this fault will not be repeated and we would like to thank you for your patience. We look forward to hearing from you again.
This problem has now been rectified and will not happen again. Thank you for pointing out the problem and we look forward to your next order.*

Of course not all complaint are justified and if, after careful and thorough investigation, you decide that a complaint is not justified you should be firm but polite in rejecting it. If you reject the complaint make sure you give a clear explanation of why you think the complaint was not justified. Remember you want the customer to continue doing business with you.


EXAMPLE LETTER OF COMPLAINT

*Yoto Importers
Canary Wharf
Isle of Dogs
London E14 7IR*

*Barrack Toys
East End Road
London E4 5QT*

10 / 9 / 93

*Dear Sir/Madam
I am writing to complain about order No. 356/Y.
We had ordered one hundred Gameboy machines but on unpacking the order we found only fifty sets.
This is the second time such a mistake has occurred and the delay involved in sending us the extra units is causing us serious problems.
I am not sure how these mistakes are occurring but I think we can overcome the problem by double checking the ordered amount each time.
I look forward to a speedy reply to this problem.*

*Yours Faithfully

Ron T. Brown
Managing Director*

EXPLAIN LETTER OF REPLY

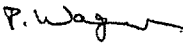
*Yoto Importers
Canary Wharf
Isle of Dogs
London E14 7IR*

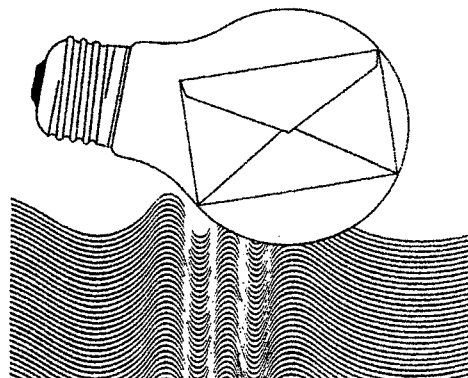
12 / 9 / 93

*Barrack Toys
East End Road
London E4 5QT*

*Dear Mr. Brown
Thank you for your letter of the 10th September informing us of the discrepancy in order No. 356/Y.
The mistake was due to an error in the despatch department which we have now solved.
I have instructed our despatch department to send you the missing items immediately.
I agree with your proposed solution to this problem and I am enclosing our new fax number which should make ordering from us more convenient and reliable.
In closing I would like to apologize for this error and also point out that it will not occur again.
We look forward to your next order.*

Yours sincerely

*
Ms. P. Wagner
Sales Manageress*



SLOVNÍK:

polite	<i>zdvořilý</i>
rude	<i>hrubý, drzý</i>
invoice	<i>faktura</i>
consignment	<i>zásilka zboží</i>
behind schedule	<i>po termínu</i>
thoroughly	<i>důkladně, naprosto</i>
to justify something	<i>ospravedlňovat něco</i>
to rectify a mistake	<i>napravit chybu</i>

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